

QUICK START GUIDE

SNAP Employment and Training third-party providers

Minnesota SNAP E&T—investing in skills building and employment preparation for low-income Minnesotans, contributing to an inclusive and diverse workforce.



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Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program Quick Start Guide is a tool to assist third-party providers, including community based organizations and community colleges in understanding the basic process for providing SNAP E&T services in Minnesota. This guide provides a high-level overview of the roles and responsibilities of participants, primary and secondary providers, and the state to provide SNAP E&T services smoothly and effectively. This guide provides a comprehensive overview of what it takes to operate a SNAP E&T program, so prospective providers can determine whether SNAP E&T is right for them.

The Quick Start Guide was developed in 2017 by stakeholders, including representatives from the Department of Human Services, Department of Employment and Economic Development, county human services staff and several community-based organizations including current SNAP E&T providers and prospective providers. Currently, a third-party provider can become a secondary provider in Minnesota by:

- Contracting directly with the Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Becoming a sub-contracted provider through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Through a primary provider’s local area plan.

This guide focuses on contacting directly with the Minnesota Department of Human Services. While the other two options generally follow the same processes and procedures, prospective providers should contact the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development or their local primary provider for any additional requirements.

A few notes to assist in understanding the Quick Start Guide.

- The activities in this guide are organized into five steps based largely on the participant’s progress through the SNAP E&T program. The first step assumes that a prospective SNAP E&T participant has interacted with a community-based organization and expressed interest in employment & training services, although the participant may or may not be receiving SNAP at this time.



- This tool is deliberately framed at a high enough level to provide an overall orientation to the SNAP E&T program.
- A third-party provider is referred to as the secondary provider; the primary provider is either a county, tribe or their primary contracted provider. Accordingly, third-party providers are referred to as secondary providers throughout the guide.
- Counties use different terms to refer to staff who have similar responsibilities in determining SNAP eligibility (financial workers, eligibility workers, human service representatives, etc.). This guide uses the term “financial workers.”
- Not all primary providers currently administer SNAP E&T through secondary providers, and those that do have some authority in designing their own processes. Thus, it is imperative that prospective SNAP E&T providers connect with their primary providers to determine exact processes and procedures.
- This guide assumes the secondary provider has access and trained staff to use WorkForce One, and has set-up access to SNAP E&T within WorkForce One.

The information in this guide represents the SNAP E&T program as currently administered by the state of Minnesota. Each participant has a unique situation; in many cases, working with individuals will necessitate slight changes to the operations presented within this guide. To further research SNAP E&T, and determine if the program is right for a prospective provider, refer to the [Prospective Provider Packet](#) on the SNAP E&T website, mn.gov/dhs/snap-e-and-t/.

Definitions and resources

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents are applicants/recipients between the ages of 18 and 50. Unless they meet mandatory work provisions or an exemption, they are eligible for SNAP for only three months in any 36-month period. The 36-month period begins the first full month they receive SNAP. Once started, the 36-month period continues to run uninterrupted, even during times the person does not receive SNAP or is exempt from the time limit.

ApplyMN

Online application used to apply for or recertify SNAP, cash and/or emergency program benefits. <https://applymn.dhs.mn.gov/online-app-web/spring/public/process-login?execution=e1s1>

Banked months

Additional three to six SNAP benefit months that may be available to an ABAWD participant. Nationally, banked months are more commonly referred to as 15 percent exemptions.

Bridge to Benefits

An online public assistance screening tool for individuals and families, to determine their eligibility for all assistance programs. <http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org/>

Combined Application Form (CAF)

Used to apply for or recertify SNAP, cash and/or emergency programs. <https://mn.gov/dhs/general-public/publications-forms-resources/edocs/>

County offices

<https://mn.gov/portal/government/local/counties/>

Expedited SNAP

Allows mandatory verifications (except identification) to be waived for initial approval. Expedited SNAP applications should be processed within five days of being received by the county agency. Criteria:

- Units with less than \$150 in monthly gross income and \$100 or less in liquid assets
- Units whose combined monthly gross income and liquid assets are less than their actual monthly housing and utility costs.

Financial worker

Although the title may vary by organization, for the purposes of this guide, financial worker refers to the person who determines SNAP eligibility.

Frequently Asked Questions

mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/economic-assistance/food-nutrition/resources/snap-faqs.jsp

Mandatory and voluntary SNAP E&T participants

SNAP recipients may be mandatory or voluntary participants in SNAP E&T.

- **Mandatory participant:** In Minnesota, Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) are mandatory SNAP E&T participants. When working with a mandatory participant, the secondary provider is required to track work participation hours in order to verify program compliance. A mandatory participant who does not meet the required hours, may lose their SNAP benefits after three months. ABAWDS will be sanctioned for noncompliance with their employment plan.
- **Voluntary participant:** A SNAP recipient who meets an exemption from working with SNAP E&T, but chooses to participate in the SNAP E&T program. Voluntary participants do not have to meet work participation hour requirements; the secondary provider does not need to track these participants. Voluntary participants cannot be sanctioned and cannot have their SNAP benefits closed for noncooperation. To determine if a SNAP recipient is a mandatory or voluntary participant, check with the county financial worker or the primary provider.

| Mandatory | Voluntary |
|--|---|
| Not exempt from work participation—Can be sanctioned | Exempt from work participation—Cannot be sanctioned |

Minnesota Department of Human Services

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) is the lead SNAP agency responsible to the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). DHS administers the SNAP Employment and Training program. mn.gov/dhs/

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) is Minnesota’s workforce agency. DEED works to strengthen an employer-driven SNAP Employment and Training program to respond to local labor markets and integrate SNAP employment and training into Minnesota workforce development programs. mn.gov/deed/

Primary provider

Currently funded with 100 percent funds who are assigned a case record in WorkForce One (WF1). Primary providers can be a county or a contracted provider. Primary providers own the WorkForce One (WF1) person-record and can serve the participant by providing services directly or assigning a participant to a secondary provider.

Prospective Provider Packet

https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/prospective-provider-packet_tcm1053-310575.pdf

Secondary provider

Community-based organizations or community colleges who are contracted by the state — or by an intermediary such as a county — who operate a 50 percent reimbursement program. Some secondary providers have MAXIS view access and WorkForce One (WF1) read and write access. Other secondary providers have more restricted access if contacted by an intermediary. Secondary providers can subcontract with other partner organizations to serve eligible SNAP recipients. In this case, secondary providers will assume intermediary functions and responsibilities.

SNAP basics

mn.bridgetobenefits.org/

SNAP E&T components and allowable activities

See Appendix B of the [Employment and Training Toolkit](#).

SNAP screening tool

edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/public/DHS-3529-ENG

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a county-run, state-supervised Federal program that helps Minnesotans with low incomes get the food they need for sound nutrition and well-balanced meals.

Step 1: SNAP verification, or application and enrollment

The first step is to determine whether a participant in your organization is enrolled in or eligible for SNAP. You can verify current SNAP status through MAXIS (the state eligibility system) or by having a participant call their local county agency. If a participant is active on SNAP for the current month, you can proceed to step two, enrolling them in SNAP E&T.

If a participant is not receiving SNAP, screen participants for [basic eligibility](#) and ask if they would like to apply for SNAP benefits. Complete an application for benefits using the [Combined Application Form \(CAF\)](#) or [ApplyMN](#). Send the application and a signed release form to participants' residential county. An interview (in person or by phone) with a county financial worker is required before eligibility can be determined. After SNAP benefits are approved, participants will be referred to SNAP E&T. Keep in mind that SNAP eligibility is separate from SNAP E&T. Helping participants with SNAP applications is not reimbursable — services are reimbursable as of the SNAP eligibility date.

Table 1: SNAP verification, or application and enrollment—roles and responsibilities

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider | State |
|--|---|---|--|
| Participant requesting E&T services from secondary provider. | Determine if participant is receiving SNAP benefits using MAXIS system or by calling local county. | Coordinate with the financial worker, or eligibility staff to verify SNAP status. In some jurisdictions, the primary provider and the financial worker will be in the same organization. Where they are not, close communication and collaboration is essential to running a successful program. | Provide training on MAXIS and WF1 for secondary providers (continual). |
| | If participant is not receiving SNAP and is interested, screen for eligibility — may be eligible for expedited application. | | |
| Complete application for SNAP benefits | Assist participants with completing application (CAF, ApplyMN), or refer them to local county office or | | |

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider | State |
|--|--|------------------|-------|
| | agency appointed to provide SNAP application assistance, to apply in person. | | |
| Sign release of information allowing secondary providers and counties to communicate on application and eligibility. | Submit a signed release of information with application to the participant's local county. | | |
| Gather and submit verification documents required for SNAP, and participate in verification interview with county staff. | | | |

Step 2: Enrollment in SNAP Employment and Training

When participants' status has been verified, can be enrolled in employment and training services. The secondary provider works with participants to complete the prerequisites of SNAP E&T enrollment.

- Attend a SNAP E&T orientation
- Complete an employment plan
- Work with the primary provider to officially enroll participants into SNAP E&T and assigned a secondary provider via WF1 — currently a secondary provider completes a pre-assessment and submits to the primary provider.

Table 2: Enrollment in SNAP Employment and Training—roles and responsibilities

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider |
|---|--|---|
| Complete a SNAP E&T orientation through the primary or secondary provider. Orientation is different for mandatory versus voluntary participants. | Choose to include a simplified version of a SNAP E&T orientation (English language video ; Spanish language video) in combination with a provider's regular intake process. Alternately, send participants to a primary provider to complete orientation. | Provide group orientations at designated locations. |
| Create an employment plan. | Complete an employment plan with the participant. Select allowable SNAP E&T training and services (see Guidance on Costs and Reimbursements). Complete applicable provider assessments for barriers, interests, experiences and other background information. | |
| Complete and sign: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pre-assessment form Intake paperwork as required by secondary provider. | Assist in the completion of the pre-assessment form. Gather and send pre-assessment to primary provider via e-mail or fax. | Receive pre-assessment and extract participant's referral from the WF1 DHS Referral Que. Assign the ABAWD service model to the case (if applicable). |
| | Save and file all electronic and hard copy of documents applicable to participant case file for later use. | Save the pre-assessment and release of information in participant case file. |
| Continue to work with secondary provider and maintain an active status. | Begin services with participant while case is being processed in WF1. Save case notes related to activities and support services until case is accessible in WF1. | Complete the enrollment process for each participant in WF1. Assign secondary provider staff in WF1. |

Step 3: Training and services

Once a participant is officially approved for SNAP, the program and support services that a participant uses are now eligible for reimbursement, as long as the participant is verified in the month the cost is incurred. At this point in the process, the participant will have attended orientation and completed an employment plan. The participant will receive support from the secondary provider to ensure that the participant works to meet the goals listed in their employment plan.

While a secondary provider's employment and training program may have its own participation requirements, SNAP E&T does as well, depending on a participant's status — mandatory or voluntary. Mandatory SNAP E&T participants must meet [program participation requirements](#) in order to continue receiving SNAP benefits.

Table 3: Training and services--roles and responsibilities

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider |
|--|--|--|
| | Confirm if participant is a mandatory or voluntary; use this information to follow corresponding tracking and reporting requirements. Monitor participant's SNAP verification each month to assure eligibility. | |
| Pursue employment plan activities. | Support participant in persisting and completing employment plan, training and job placement. | Check WF1 for support services provided by secondary providers prior to providing support services. |
| (If relevant) Meet SNAP E&T requirements, and document and submit participation hours to county or secondary provider. | Track participant's progress in WF1 by opening and closing relevant activities. | Run reports of SNAP E&T participation for mandatory participants — send status updates to financial worker. |
| Report changes income or employment status to primary provider and financial worker. | (If relevant) Assist participant in documentation and submission of participation hours to county. | Monitor participant notes/status in WF1 and make appropriate changes to the participant's case based on information. |

Step 4: Billing and invoicing

Once participants have been enrolled in SNAP E&T and are receiving qualified training and employment services, expenses can be submitted for reimbursement to the Minnesota Department of Human Services monthly. The process involves verifying that each participant was on SNAP at the time the expense was incurred, allocating and documenting costs thoroughly, maintaining records in WF1 (as well as back up files), and sending the department an invoice by the 20th of each month.

Table 4: Billing and invoicing—roles and responsibilities

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider | State |
|---|--|---|-------|
| Participants must be on SNAP at the time the cost was incurred (except 90 day job retention). | Verify that participants were receiving SNAP at the time any service cost was incurred (e.g. MAXIS verification). | Same as secondary provider if providing SNAP E&T components and/or support services directly. | |
| | Pay for allowable expenses (see Guidance on Costs and Reimbursements) up-front using non-federal funds that are not committed as a match to other federally funded programs. Must be able to track non-federal funds and guarantee through documentation that the source of matching funds is non-federal and allowable. | | |
| | Track staff hours relating to SNAP E&T. Track support services and enter in WF1. | | |
| | Maintain back-up documentation for all expenses billed for future audit. Must be able to retain records for up to seven years (or as mandated by law) for audits, monitoring and review by state and/or federal agencies. | | |

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider | State |
|-------------|---|------------------|--|
| | Must be willing to participate in any required federal audits, visits or other mandated reporting requirements. | | |
| | Send monthly billing form to the department. Due the 20th of the month. Include: administrative cost, program cost, and support services; also include number of participants served and number of new participants for the month. | | Request reimbursement from federal Food and Nutrition Service. |

Step 5: Employment and/or closing a case

Once participants are no longer eligible for SNAP (may still be eligible for retention services), it is time to close the case in WF1. Reasons for closing a case include finding employment that exceeds SNAP income eligibility, staying successfully employed for three full months, inactivity or opting out.

Table 5: Employment and/or closing a case--roles and responsibilities

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider |
|--|--|--|
| Report job information and employment verification to secondary provider and financial worker. | Assist participants in employment verification. | Communicate information to financial worker, who determines whether participant income makes them ineligible for SNAP. |
| Report any changes to provider and respond to periodic check-ins during three-month period. | Provide retention services and check-ins for the first three full months after obtaining employment-record in WF1. | Receive or request employment verifications, e.g. pay stubs from participants and/or providers. |

| Participant | Secondary provider | Primary provider |
|-------------|--|--|
| | After successful three month retention, let primary provider know it's time to exit case from WF1. | Exit case from WF1 and report to financial worker accordingly. |

Contact the SNAP E&T Team

Contact DHS.SNAPET@state.mn.us with questions or feedback. For all E&T resources currently available in Minnesota, visit the [DHS SNAP Employment and Training website](#) at mn.gov/dhs/snap-e-and-t/.